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Lectures

THE

Progress of Socialism :

A LECTURE BY

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(THIRD EDITION.)

PRICE ONE PENNY.

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LONDON.

Sold by the MODERN PRESS, 13, Paternoster Row, E.C.;
WILLIAM REEVES, 185, Fleet Street, E.C.;
FREETHOUGHT PUBLISHING COMPANY, 63, Fleet Street, E.C., etc.

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1890.

This Lecture was prepared at the invitation of the Sunday Lecture Society, and delivered in January, 1888.

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THE PROGRESS OF SOCIALISM.

IT is a sign of the times when so eminently respectable a body as the Council of the Sunday Lecture Society arranges for a lecture on Socialism, and invites an avowed Socialist to expound to you its influence on social welfare. We are rapidly getting to the third of the stages through which every notion has in England to pass: It's impossible: It's against the Bible: We knew it before. "We are all Socialists now," says one of Her Majesty's late Ministers, and, in sober truth, there is no anti-Socialist political party. What has long formed part of the unconscious basis of our practice is now formulated as a definite theory, and the tide of European Socialism is rolling in upon us like a flood. All the authorities, whatever their own views, can but note its rapid progress. If we look back along the line of history, we see the irresistible sweep of the growing tendency: if we turn to contemporary industrial development it is there: if we fly to biological science we do not escape the lesson: on all sides the sociologic evolution compels our adherence. There is no resting place for stationary Toryism in the scientific universe. The whole history of the human race cries out against the old-fashioned Individualism.

Economic Science, at any rate, will now have none of it. When the Editor of the new issue of the Encyclopaedia Britannica lately required from some eminent Economist an article on Political Economy, fully representing the present position of that science, it was to an avowed Socialist that he addressed himself, and the article took the form of an elaborate survey of the inevitable convergence of all the economic tendencies towards Socialism. At the present moment (December, 1887,) out of a total of 14 courses of lectures on Economics being delivered under the auspices of various public bodies in London, eight, to my knowledge, and possibly more, are being given by professed Socialists. I have been told that one of the University Extension Societies lately found some difficulty in obtaining young economist lecturers sufficiently free from what some of its older members thought the Socialistic taint. And this is not to be wondered at when we learn that Professor Marshall has at various times declared himself a Socialist, and when we find Professor

Sidgwick, that most careful of men, contributing an article to the *Contemporary Review*,* to prove that the main principles of Socialism are a plain deduction from accepted economic doctrines, and in no way opposed to these.

Indeed, those who remember John Stuart Mill's emphatic adhesion to Socialism, both the name and the thing, in his "Autobiography,"† cannot be surprised at this tendency of economists. The only wonder is, at the way in which the interested defenders of economic monopoly are able to persuade the British public that Political Economy is against Socialism, and to make even the Bishop of Rochester believe that its laws "forbid" anything but the present state of things.

It is, however, time to give a plain definition of Socialism, to prevent any mistake as to meanings. Nothing is more common than the statement, "I can't understand what Socialism is." But this is sheer intellectual laziness. The word is to be found in our modern dictionaries. The Encyclopædia Britannica contains exhaustive articles upon its every aspect. There are enough Socialist lectures in London every week, good, bad, and indifferent, to drive the meaning into every willing ear.

The abstract word "Socialism" denotes a particular principle of social organisation. We may define this principle either from the constitutional or the economic standpoint. We may either put it as "the control by the community of the means of production for public advantage, instead of for private profit," or "the whole community obtaining all rent and interest." In either case, its opposite is the control of the means of production for individual ends, and the individual consumption of rent or interest.

But this definition does not satisfy some people. They want a complete description of a Socialist State, an elaborately worked out, detailed plan, like Sir Thomas More's "Utopia" or Gulliver's Travels. Such fancy sketches have, indeed, at times been thrown off by Socialists as by all other thinkers, but with the growing realisation of social evolution, men gradually cease to expect to be able to devise a perfect and final social state, and the dreams of Fourier and Cabet, like those of Godwin and Comte, become outworn and impossible to us. There will never come a moment when we can say, "Now let us rest, for Socialism is established:" any more than we can say, "Now Radicalism is established." The correct principles of social organisation must already have secured partial adoption, as a condition of the continued existence of every existing social organism, and the progress

* "Economic Socialism," *Contemporary Review*, Nov., 1886.

† Pages 231—2.

of Socialism is but their more complete recognition, and their conscious adoption as the lines of advance upon which social improvement depends.

Looking back along the whole line of human progress, we see one main economic characteristic underlying every form of society. As soon as production is sufficiently advanced to furnish more than maintenance, there arises, wherever two or three are gathered together, a fierce struggle for the surplus product. This struggle varies in outward form according to the time and circumstances, but remains essentially alike in economic character. The individuals or classes who have possessed social power, have at all times, consciously or unconsciously, made use of that power in such a way as to leave to the great majority of their fellows practically nothing beyond the means of subsistence according to the current local standard. The additional product, determined by the relative differences in productive efficiency of the different sites, soils, capitals, and forms of skill above the margin of cultivation, has gone to those exercising control over these valuable but scarce productive factors. This struggle to secure the economic rent is the key to the confused history of European progress, and the underlying, unconscious motive of all revolutions. The student of history finds that the great world moves, like the poet's snake, on its belly.

The social power which has caused this unequal division of the worker's product has taken various forms. Beginning, probably, in open personal violence in the merely predatory stage of society, it has passed in one field, through tribal war, to political supremacy, embodied, for instance, abroad in a "Jingo" foreign policy, and at home in vindictive class legislation. A survival in England at the present time is the severity of the punishment for trifling offences against property compared with that for personal assaults, and its effect is curiously seen when the legal respect for person and that for property are, to some extent, opposed to each other, as in the case of wife-beating.

The social power does not, however, always take the forms of physical strength or political supremacy. From the Indian medicine man and the sun-priests of Peru down to the Collector of Peter's Pence and the Treasurer of the Salvation Army, theological influences have ever been used to divert a portion of this rent to spiritual uses, nourishing (like the meats offered to idols), whole classes of non-producers.

But by far the most important means of appropriating the surplus product has been the organisation of labour. The industrial leader, who can cause his fellows to organise their toil under his direction, is able thereby to cause an enormous increase in their productivity. The advantages of co-opera-

tive or associated labour were discovered long before they were described by Adam Smith or Fourier, and human history is the record of their ever-increasing adoption. Civilisation itself is nothing but an ever-widening co-operation.

But who is to get the benefit of this increased productivity? In early times it turned upon the political condition of the labourer. The universally first form of industrial organisation is chattel slavery. At a certain stage in social development there seems to have been possible no other kind of industrial co-operation. The renunciation of personal independence is, as Darwin observed of the Fuegian, the initial step towards civilisation.

As a slave the worker obtained at first nothing but bare maintenance at the lowest economic rate. Cato even advises the Roman noble that the bailiff or foreman need not have so large a ration as the other slaves, his work, though more skilled, being less exhausting. On the other hand, the surplus value was not yet differentiated into its component economic parts, and went in an undivided stream of profit all to the master.

Advancing civilisation, itself rendered possible only by chattel slavery, gradually made this form of servitude incompatible with intellectual and moral development, and inadequate to industrial needs. The slave became the feudal serf or the tribal dependent. As a chattel he had ceded all but his maintenance to his master; as a serf he rendered to his lord three or four days' unpaid labour per week, maintaining himself on the product of the rest.

The further development of the social organism proved no more favourable to feudalism than to chattel slavery, and the politically free labourer came into existence. But the economic servitude of the worker did not cease with his political fetters. With the chains of innate status, there disappeared also its economic privileges, and the free labourer found himself, especially in England, in a community where the old common rights over the soil were being gradually but effectually extinguished. He became a landless stranger in his own country.

The development of competitive production for sale, and the industrial revolution of the past century, has involved, moreover, in order to live, not merely access to the land, but the use, in addition, of increasingly large masses of capital, at first in agriculture, then in foreign trade, then in manufacture, and now, finally, also in distributive industries. The mere worker became steadily less and less industrially independent as his political freedom increased. From an independent producing unit, he passed into a mere item in a vast industrial army, over the organisation of which he had

no control. He was free, but free only to work at the market wage or starve. Other option he had none, and even now the freedom to work at any wage is denied to many at a time for varying periods, and we have the constantly recurring phenomenon of the unemployed. When it suits any person having the use of land and capital to employ the worker, this is only done on condition that two important deductions, rent and interest, can be made from the product, for the benefit of two in this capacity absolutely unproductive classes, those possessing the legal ownership of land and capital. The reward of labour being thus reduced on an average by at least one-third, the remaining eightpence out of the shilling is then shared between the various classes who *have* co-operated in the production, including the inventor, the managing employer, and the mere wage-worker—but shared in the competitive struggle in such a way that at least fourpence goes to a favoured set of educated workers numbering one-fifth of the whole, leaving four-fifths to divide less than fourpence out of the shilling between them. The consequence is the social condition we find around us. A fortunate few, owing to their legal power over the instruments of wealth-production, are able to command the services of thousands of industrial slaves whose faces they have never seen, without rendering any return whatever to them or to society in exchange. A larger body of persons contribute some labour, but are able, from their education or their cultivated ability, to choose occupations for which the competition wage is still high, owing to the relatively small number of possible competitors. These two classes together number only one-fifth of the whole. On the other side is the great mass of the people, the weekly wage-earners, four out of every five* of the nation, toiling perpetually for less than a third of the aggregate product of labour, at an annual wage averaging at most £35 per adult, hurried into unnecessarily early graves by the severity of their lives, and dying, as regards, at least, one-third of them, destitute or actually in receipt of poor law relief.

To-morrow morning, in London alone, twenty to twenty-five thousand adult men will fight like savages for permission to labour in the docks for fourpence an hour—and one-third of them will fight in vain, and be turned workless away.† With their families these men make up 100,000 souls, a whole Norwich or Brighton, in the single class of casual dock labourers in this one city.

Tomorrow morning thirty to thirty five thousand London

* Prof. Leoni Levi, *Times*, 13th January, 1885; and see "Facts for Socialists" (Fabian Society Tract, No. 5).

† Mansion House Relief Committee Report, 1886, p. 7

children will go to school in the bitter blast absolutely break-fastless ; this is the average number at school without food at all since the previous day.* How many in addition have had an insufficient breakfast we know not. But this we know—they die—the infants at any rate, in appalling heaps around us, of virtual starvation. Three times as many young children per thousand die in the working class as in the upper class. In my own parish is a naturally healthy area, inhabited by the poor, where the total death-rate is four times that of the other parts of the same district, even when no epidemic rages.† It is not enough that we of the middle and upper classes should demand the unceasing labor of our poorer brethren, that we should shorten their lives, and afflict them with disease for our comfort. We must also sacrifice the little children to our greed and harrow up in our unthinking cruelty all the most sacred feelings of our bondsmen.

And then, when we have bound the laborer fast to his wheel, when we have practically excluded the average man from every real chance of improving his condition, when we have virtually denied to him the means of having any share in the higher feelings and the larger sympathies of the cultured race, when we have shortened his life in our service, stunted his growth in our factories, racked him with unnecessary disease by our exactions, tortured his soul with that worst of all pains, the constant fear of poverty, condemned his wife and children to sicken and die before his eyes, in spite of his own perpetual round of toil—then we are aggrieved that he often loses hope, attempts to drown his cares, and driven by his misery irresistibly down the steep hill of vice, passes into that evil circle where vice begets poverty, and poverty intensifies vice, until Society unrelentingly stamps him out as vermin. And then we lay the flattering unction to our souls that it was his own fault, that he had his chance, and we preach to his fellows thrift and temperance, prudence and virtue, but always industry, that industry of others which keeps the industrial machine in motion, so that we can still enjoy the opportunity of taxing it. Nay, so that we may not lose his labour, we keep him when we can from absolute starvation, and when the world has taken his all, we offer him the pauper's dole. Nothing gives a more striking picture of his condition than the official statistics of our pauperism. We have clogged our relief with irksome and humiliating conditions, so that the poor often die lingering deaths rather than submit to them.

* Founded on partial census taken in various Board Schools, 1887-8

† The Shelton Street and Bloomsbury Sub-Districts respectively, & the parish of St. Giles and St. George. See Report of Vestry, 1887.

Yet there is a class in receipt of this bitter bread during any one year, numbering between three and four millions, one in ten of the whole population, one in eight of the wage-earning class.* In some rural districts *every* aged labourer is a pauper. When the Queen, last June, passed in review the whole population of London, she may, perhaps, have reflected that for one in every five of that whole crowd, a pauper's death was waiting. One fifth of the population of the richest city in the world die in the workhouse or the hospital (not including recipients of out-door relief,) and the proportion for the wage-earning class alone must, of course, be much greater.†

To anyone who knows the silent anguish of the long struggle before the workhouse is reached, how the iron enters into the soul in that desperate losing fight down the hill of poverty, what a sum of misery is here depicted. These people, our brothers, were not *born* paupers. They, too, had their entry into life, dark and unpromising it may have been, but never without hope, and some youthful aspirations. Then comes the check, and the cold world quenches at last, after more or less soul-agony, both hope and aspiration, and our fellow-man once erect is borne down by *our* pressure into a pauper's grave.

This is the nett result of our social arrangements after a generation of gradual *improvement*, greater, we are told, than England ever before knew. The distress is only normal. The condition of the people exhibits a marked advance in prosperity. It may be that this is true; nay, owing to the silent progress of Socialism it probably is true; yet the problem for *us* is no lighter. Are things *now* such as we can dare to be responsible for? Let a sober, non-Socialist authority of weight answer. Mr. Frederic Harrison, writing just three years ago says:—"To me at least, it would be "enough to condemn modern society as hardly an advance "on slavery or serfdom, if the permanent condition of "industry were to be that which we now behold, that 90 "per cent. of the actual producers of wealth have no home "that they can call their own beyond the end of a week; "have no bit of soil or so much as a room that belongs to "them; have nothing of value of any kind except as much "old furniture as will go in a cart; have the precarious "chance of weekly wages which barely suffice to keep them "in health; are housed for the most part in places that no "man thinks fit for his horse; are separated by so narrow a

* Mulhall's *Dictionary of Statistics*, p. 346; see also "Facts for Socialists."

† In 1884, out of 81,951 deaths in London, 9,909 were in workhouses, 6,559 in hospitals, and 278 in public lunatic asylums. The deaths of paupers in receipt of outdoor relief are not included.—*Registrar-General's Report*, 1886, C—4,722, pp. 94 and 118.

"margin of destitution that a month of bad trade, sickness "or unexpected loss, brings them face to face with hunger "and pauperism. . . . This is the normal state of the "average workmen in town or country." (Report of Industrial Remuneration Conference, 1886, p. 429.)

Such then is our position to-day. Those who believe it possible that the festering evils of social ulceration can be cured without any fundamental change in property relations, rely mainly on three leading remedies, Trades Unions, Co-operation and a general recrudescence of a Christ-like unselfishness. What does the dry light of science say to these homeopathic "pills against the earthquake"?

The belief in universal Trades Unionism as a means of raising wages all round must be at once dismissed as involving a logical fallacy. Certainly, the workers in some few skilled trades have managed to improve their economic position by strict Trade Unions. We are never allowed to forget the splendid incomes earned by these aristocrats of labour, a mere thirteenth of the whole labour class. But those who merely counsel the rest to go and do likewise forget that Trade Union victories are only won by strict limitation of the numbers in the particular trade, and the excluded candidates necessarily go to depress the condition of the outsiders. The Trades Unionist does but raise himself on the bodies of his less fortunate comrades. If all were equally strong, all would be equally powerless—a point clearly proved by Prof. Cairnes,* and obvious to all Trade Unionists themselves.

Co-operation is a more seductive means of escape, and most social reformers cannot, even now, refrain from keeping alive lingering hopes that some solution may here be found. But a whole generation of experiment has done little more than show the futility of expecting real help from this quarter. Less than one four hundredth part of the industry of the country is yet carried on by co-operation. The whole range of industrial development seems against it, and no ground for hope in Co-operation as a complete answer to the social problem can be gained from economic science. It fails to deal even with the real elements of the case. It may claim to obviate competition, but "the deepest root," says Mill,† "of the evils and iniquities which fill the industrial world is *not* competition, but the subjection of labour to capital, and the enormous share which the possessors of the instruments of production are able to take from the produce." Co-operation can make no real defence against

* "Some Leading Principles of Political Economy," p. 293.

† "Principles of Political Economy," last edition (1865), p. 477 (quoting from Feugueray).

the continuance of the exactions of this "enormous share"—rent and interest—the continued individual enjoyment of which it, indeed, actually presupposes. It affords a valuable moral training, a profitable but somewhat hazardous savings bank for small investments, and a temporary means of interesting the worker in the industrial affairs of his country. But it is merely a survival from the days before Joint Stock Companies existed, and ordinary joint stock investment is now rapidly elbowing it out of the field, and is already a hundred and sixty times as great as Co-operation. Now even the most enthusiastic believer in the virtues of association will hardly expect salvation merely from a régime of Joint Stock Companies, and this, and not co-operation, is clearly the line in which our industrial development is rapidly travelling. It will, of course, be some time before the more enthusiastic co-operators realise this, or even become aware that modern economic science turns regretfully against them, but such eminent authorities as Cliffe Leslie, Professor Walker, Mr. Leonard Courtney, and Dr. J. T. Ingram, concur in dismissing the idea of universal co-operation as chimerical.*

There remains the ideal of the rapid spread of a Christ-like unselfishness. Of this hope I desire to speak with all the respect which so ancient a dream deserves; if it were realised it would, indeed, involve an upset of present property arrangements, compared with which Socialism is a mere trifle, yet science must perforce declare that the notion of any but the slowest real improvement in general moral habit is absolutely without warrant. Forms of egoism may change, and moral habits vary, but constituted as we are, it seems inevitable for healthy personal development that an at best instructed and unconscious, egoism should preponderate in the individual. It is the business of the community, not to lead into temptation this healthy natural feeling, and so to develop its social institutions that individual egoism is necessarily directed so as to promote only the well-being of all. The older writers, led by Rousseau, in the reaction against aristocratic government, saw this arrangement in absolute freedom. But that crude vision has long been demolished. "It is, indeed certain," sums up Dr. Ingram,† "that industrial society will not permanently remain without a systematic organisation. The mere conflict of private interests will never produce a well-ordered commonwealth of labour."

Is there then no hope? Is there no chance of the worker ever being released from the incubus of what Mill called,‡ "the great social evil of a non-labouring class," whose mono-

* Article on "Political Economy" in *Encyclopædia Britannica*, by Dr. J. T. Ingram, vol. xix, p. 382.

† *Encyclopædia Britannica*, vol. xix, p. 382.

‡ "Principles of Political Economy," p. 455.

polies caused the " taxation of the industrious for the support of indolence, if not of plunder."*

Mill tells us that he found a sure and certain hope in the Progress of Socialism which he foresaw, and so energetically aided. We who call ourselves Socialists to-day, largely through Mill's teaching and example, find a confirmation of this hope in social history and economics, and see already in the distance the glad vision of a brighter day, when, practically, the whole product of labour will be the worker's, and the worker's alone, and at last social arrangements will be deliberately based upon the Apostolic rule ignored by so many Christians, that if a man do not work, neither shall he eat.

But it must clearly be recognised that no mere charitable palliation of existing individualism can achieve this end. Against this complacent delusion of the philanthropist, Political Economy emphatically protests. So long as the instruments of production are in unrestrained private ownership, so long must the tribute of the workers to the drones continue : so long will the toilers' reward inevitably be reduced by their exactions. No tinkering with the Land Laws can abolish or even diminish Economic Rent. The whole series of Irish legislation, for instance, has not altered its amount by a single penny, however much it has resulted in its redistribution. The *whole* equivalent of every source of fertility or advantage of all land over and above the very worst land in use, is necessarily abstracted from the mere worker. So long as Lady Matheson can "own" the island of Lewis, and "do what she likes with her own," it is the very emphatic teaching of Political Economy that the earth may be the Lord's, but the fulness thereof must, inevitably, be the landlord's.

There is an interesting episode in English history among James the First's disputes with the City Corporation, then the protector of popular liberties. James, in his wrath, threatened, as a punishment upon London, to remove the Court to Oxford. "Provided only your Majesty leave us the Thames," cleverly replied the Lord Mayor. But economic dominion is more subtle than king-craft—our landlords have stolen from us even the Thames. No Londoner who is not a landlord obtains one farthing of economic benefit from the existence of London's ocean highway ; the whole equivalent of its industrial advantage goes to swell our compulsory tribute of 35 millions sterling—London's annual rental.

And it is precisely the same with industrial capital. The worker in the factory gets absolutely no advantage from the

* "Principles of Political Economy," p. 477.

machinery which causes the product of his labour to be multiplied a hundredfold. He gets no more of that product as wages for himself, in a state of free and unrestrained competition, than his colleague laboring at the very margin of cultivation with the very minimum of capital. The artisan producing shoes by the hundred in the modern machinery works of Southwark or Northampton gets no higher wages than the surviving hand cobbler in the bye street. The whole advantage of industrial capital, like the whole advantage of superior land, necessarily goes to him who legally owns it. The mere worker can have none of them. "The 'remuneration of labour, as such,'" wrote Professor Cairnes in 1874,* "skilled or unskilled, can never rise much above its present level."

Nor is it the increase of population which effects this result. During the present century, indeed, in spite of an unparalleled increase in numbers, the wealth annually produced in England *per head* has nearly doubled.† If population became stationary to-morrow, other things being equal, the present rent and interest would not be affected; our numbers determine indeed how *bad* the margin of cultivation will be, and this is of vital import—but, increase or no increase, the unrestrained private ownership of land and capital necessarily involves the complete exclusion of the mere worker, as such, from all the advantages of the fertile soil on which he is born, and of the buildings, railways, and machinery he finds around him.

So much the orthodox economists tell us clearly enough. Where then is the Socialist hope?

In the political power of the workers. The industrial evolution has left them landless strangers in their own country, but the political evolution is about to make them its rulers. If unrestrained private ownership of the means of production necessarily keeps the many workers permanently poor, from no fault of their own, in order to make a few idlers rich, from no merit of their own (and this is the teaching of economic science) unrestrained private ownership will inevitably go. In this country large inroads have already been made in it, and this is the Progress of Socialism.

Three hundred years ago, for fear of the horde of "sturdy beggars," which even hanging had failed to extirpate, the wise Cecil was led to institute the general system of poor relief, a deduction from rent and interest for the benefit of those who were excluded from directly sharing in them. But the industrial evolution had not yet made this condition

* "Some Leading Principles of Political Economy," p. 348.

† Mulhall's "Dictionary of Statistics," p. 245.

universal, and little further progress was made in Socialism until the beginning of this century. Then, indeed, the acme of individualism was reached. No sentimental regulations hindered the free employment of land and capital to the highest possible personal advantage, however many lives of men, women, and children were used up in the process. Capitalists still speak of that bright time with exultation. "It was not five per cent. or ten per cent.," says one, "but 'thousands per cent. that made the fortune of Lancashire.'" But the tide turned against *Laissez faire* fifty years ago, mainly by the heroic efforts of a young nobleman, who lately passed away from us as Lord Shaftesbury, a really effective Factory Act was won, and the insatiate greed of the manufacturers was bridled by political power, in the teeth of their most determined opposition. Since then the progress has been rapid. Slice after slice has, in the public interest, been cut off the profits of land and capital, and therefore off their value, by Mines Regulation Acts, Truck Acts, Factory Acts, Adulteration Acts, Land Acts. Slice after slice has been cut off the already diminished incomes of the classes enjoying rent and interest, by the gradual shifting of taxation from consumption to incomes above £150, the average family income of the Kingdom. Step by step the political power and political organisation have been used for industrial ends, until one Minister of the Crown is the largest employer of labor in the country, and at least 150,000 men, not counting the army and navy, are directly in the service of the community, without the intervention of the profit of any middleman. The mere list of separate industrial operations which the local or national government has rescued from the private capitalist, and now conducts for the public benefit, fills three crowded pages of my manuscript. Besides our international relations and the army, navy, police and the courts of justice, the community now carries on for itself, in some part or another of these Islands, the post office, telegraphs, carriage of small commodities, coinage, surveys, the regulation of the currency and note issue, the provision of weights and measures, the making, sweeping, lighting and repairing of streets, roads and bridges, life insurance, the grant of annuities, shipbuilding, stockbroking, banking, farming, and money-lending. It provides for many thousands of us from birth to burial, midwifery, nursery, education, board and lodging, vaccination, medical attendance, medicine, public worship, amusements, and burial. It furnishes and maintains its own museums, parks, art galleries, libraries, concert-halls, roads, streets, bridges, markets, fire engines, lighthouses, pilots, ferries, surfboats, steamtugs, lifeboats, cemeteries, public

baths, washhouses, pounds, harbours, piers, wharves, hospitals, dispensaries, gasworks, waterworks, tramways, telegraph cables, allotments, cow meadows, artisans' dwellings, schools, churches and reading rooms. It carries on and publishes its own researches in geology, meterology, statistics, zoology, geography and even theology. In our Colonies, the English Government further allows and encourages the communities to provide for themselves railways, canals, pawnbroking, theatres, forestry, cinchona farms, irrigation, leper villages, casinos, bathing establishments, and immigration, and to deal in ballast, guano, quinine, opium, salt and what not. Every one of these functions, including even the army, navy, police and courts of justice, was at one time left to private enterprise, and was a source of legitimate individual investment of capital. Step by step the community has absorbed them, wholly or partially, and the area of private exploitation has been lessened. Parallel with this progressive nationalisation or municipalisation of industry, there has gone on outside the elimination of the purely personal element in business management. The older economists doubted whether anything but banking could be carried on by joint stock enterprise; now every conceivable industry, down to baking and milk-selling is successfully managed by the salaried officers of large corporations of idle shareholders. More than one-third of the whole business of England, measured by the capital employed, is now done by joint stock companies, whose shareholders could be expropriated by the community with little more dislocation of industry than is caused by the daily purchase of shares on the Stock Exchange.

Besides all its direct supersession of private enterprise, the State now registers, inspects, and controls nearly all the industrial functions which it has not yet absorbed. In addition to births, marriages, death, and electors, the State registers all solicitors, barristers, notaries, brokers, newspaper proprietors, playing-card makers, brewers, bankers, seamen, captains, mates, doctors, cabmen, hawkers, pawn-brokers, tobacconists, distillers, plate dealers, game dealers; all insurance companies, friendly societies, endowed schools and charities, limited companies, lands, houses, deeds, bills of sale, compositions, ships, arms, dogs, cabs, omnibuses, books, plays, pamphlets, newspapers, raw cotton, trademarks, and patents; lodging-houses, public-houses, refreshment houses, theatres, music-halls, places of worship, elementary schools, and dancing rooms.

Nor is the registration a mere form. Most of the foregoing are also inspected and criticised, as well as all railways, tramways, ships, mines, factories, canalboats, public convey-

ances, fisheries, slaughter-houses, dairies, milkshops, bakeries, babyfarms, gasmeters, schools of anatomy, vivisection laboratories, explosive works, Scotch herrings and common lodging houses.

The inspection is often detailed and rigidly enforced. The State in most of the larger industrial operations prescribes the age of the worker, the hours of work, the amount of air, light, cubic space, heat, lavatory accommodation, holidays, and mealtimes; where, when, and how wages shall be paid; how machinery, staircases, lift holes, mines, and quarries are to be fenced and guarded; how and when the plant shall be cleaned, repaired, and worked. Even the kind of package in which some articles shall be sold is duly prescribed, so that the individual capitalist shall take no advantage of his position. On every side he is being registered, inspected, controlled, and eventually superseded by the community, and is compelled in the meantime to cede for public purposes an ever increasing share of his rent and interest.

This is the rapid progress of Socialism, which is so noticeable in our generation. England is already the most Socialist of all European communities, though Prince Bismarck is now compelled by the uneasy ground swell of German politics to emulate us very closely. But as the oldest industrial country we are likely to keep the lead, although old-fashioned politicians will doubtless innocently continue to regard Socialism as a dangerous and absolutely untried innovation. Are there not still, in obscure nooks, disbelievers and despisers of all science? The schoolmaster never penetrates into *all* the corners in the same generation.

But some will be inclined to say, "This is not what we thought Socialism meant? We imagined that Socialists wanted to bring about a sanguinary conflict in the streets, and then the next day to compel all delicately nurtured people to work in the factories, at a fixed rate of wages."

I confess I should not like to be made responsible for all the notions about Socialism which even this audience entertains. It is not only in the nursery that bogey-making continues to be very general though quite unnecessary source of mental anxiety. We know how the English country folk regarded Napoleon Buonaparte, and just such a bogey is now being made of Socialism. All I can say is, look into it for yourselves. We do but declare unto you the line upon which English evolution is rapidly developing, and it needs nothing but a general recognition of that development, and a clear determination not to allow the selfish interests of any class to hinder or hamper its free scope for Socialism to secure universal assent. All other changes will easily flow from that state of mind, and need not be dwelt upon at present.

"But will not Socialism abolish private property." It will certainly seriously change the definition of what the community will lend its force to protect as private property.

It is already clear that no really democratic government, whether consciously Socialist or not, will lend its soldiers or its police, to enforce the "rights" of a Lord Clanrikarde. Even Mr. Matthew Arnold declares the position of the mere landlord to be an "anaclironism." The gradual limitation of the sphere of private property which has been so steadily progressing will doubtless continue, and just as courts of justice, private mints, slaves, public offices, pocket boroughs, votes, army commissions, post offices, telegraph lines, and now even continental telegraph cables landing on English shores, have ceased to be permissible personal possessions, so will the few remaining gasworks, waterworks, docks, tramways, and schools be quickly absorbed, and an end be also made to private railways and town ground-rents. Ultimately, and soon as may be possible, we look to see this absorption cover all land, and at least all the larger forms of industrial capital. In these, as Herbert Spencer pointed out 36 years ago as regards land, private ownership will eventually no more be possible than it is now with a post-office or a court of justice, both once valuable means of individual profit. Beyond the vista of this extension of collectivism, it is at present unprofitable to forecast; but we may at any rate be sure that social evolution will no more stop there than at any previous stage.

This is the Progress of Socialism. To an evergrowing number of students of history and science, the rapid increase of this progress appears at once our evident destiny and our only hope. Political Economy, at least, whatever the economist may think of Socialism, now recognises no other alternative. So long as land and industrial capital remain unrestrained in private ownership, so long must what Mill calls* "the subjection of labour to capital, and the enormous share which the possessors of the instruments of industry are able to take from the produce" inevitably continue, and even increase. The aggregate product may continue to grow, but "the remuneration of labour as such, skilled or unskilled, can never rise much above its present level," says Cairnes.

The *only* effectual means of raising the material condition of the great mass of the people, is for them to resume once more that control over their own industry which industrial evolution has taken from them, and to enter once more into the enjoyment of the fertile lands and rich mines from which

"Principles of Political Economy," p. 477.

they are now so relentlessly excluded. This is the teaching of economic science ; and the workers are rapidly coming to appreciate it.

In this direction, too, is the mighty sweep and tendency of social evolution. Without our knowledge, even against our will, we in England have already been swept far along by the irresistible wave. What Canute will dare to set a limit to its tide ? One option we have, and one only. It is ours if we will, to recognise this rising force, to give it reasonable expression, nay, within limits, even to direct its course. This is why we are Socialists, and why you must become so. But if the conscious intelligence of the natural leaders of the community lags behind the swelling tide beneath them, if we ignore the vast social forces now rapidly organising into common action, if we leave poverty and repression and injustice to go on breeding their inevitable births of angry brutality and the savage ferocity of revenge—then, indeed, social evolution will necessarily be once more accomplished by a social cataclysm. From this catastrophe, the Progress of Socialism is the path of escape.

The Buddhists have a beautiful story of the Veil of Maya, which hides from the worldly mortal the blessed Nirvana. We, too, have our Veil of Maya, woven partly of our selfishness, but even more of our prejudice and ignorance, which hides from us the True Path to which we are so near. But by patient searching of heart and diligent enquiry, we too may be purged of our prepossession and error, our Veil of Maya may be rent, and we may enter consciously on the right track. The road may be dark and steep, for we are still weak, but the Torch of Science is in our hands : in front is the glow of morning, and we know that it leads to the mountain tops where dwell the Spirits of the Dawn.